

## SHIFTING ATTITUDES IN HAWAII 1920s TO 1990

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The American missionaries to Hawai'i in the 1820s embraced the local language. They realised that the way to the heart of another culture was through the language. They had studied Latin and Greek and some knew Hebrew, so they had some idea of the cost in time and concentration in mastery of another language, especially one as different from English and the three classical languages as is Hawaiian. At first they wisely considered an alphabet. Fortunately they were aided by William Ellis, a British missionary who had served in Tahiti with the London Missionary Society, and with his guidance the Americans devised an alphabet consisting of five vowels and seven consonants that was so easy to learn that it survived intact for about 150 years.

Nevertheless, once the Hawaiians were literate and learning English, a campaign against the use of Hawaiian was waged by government, public and private schools (especially the Kamehameha Schools), and by Hawaiian parents who scolded if their children answered their Hawaiian in Hawaiian. "Speak English!" they would say.

A little girl who turned out eventually to be a famous Hawaiian scholar was punished for whispering a few Hawaiian words to classmates from the country who couldn't understand their teacher's English. This was Mary Kawena Pukui and the place was a school in Mānoa Valley run by Kawaiaha'o Church, now considered a refuge for Hawaiiana. For translating a few words she was made to stand in the corner of the classroom. Much worse was her punishment for explaining what a napkin was used for. For seven days she had to take her meals alone in the centre of the room, and her 'food' consisted of bread and water and no *poi*. She was also scolded for immorality; she had danced a few *hula* steps. Nevertheless when she grew up and worked at the Bishop Museum, she befriended the Reverend Henry H. Parker of Kawaiaha'o Church. She and her mother helped him with his revision of *A dictionary of the Hawaiian language* by Lorrin Andrews (1865).

Kawena always loved the skimpy Hawaiian alphabet, and decades later wrote the words and music for what she called an 'alphabet song' for her first grandchild, La'akea (reprinted in Elbert 1970):

*E nā hoa kamali'i*  
*E a'o mai kākou*  
*I pa'ana'au ka pī'āpā*  
*'ā, 'ē, 'ī, 'ō, 'ū*

O fellow children  
Let us learn together  
Till we've memorized the alphabet  
A, e, i, o, u

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<i>Hō, kō, lā, mū, nū</i>	H, k, l, m, n
<i>'O pī me wō nā panina</i>	P and w are the last
<i>O ka pī'āpā</i>	Of the pī'a'pā

Note that in the Hawaiian original, an apostrophe and a line over some vowels occurred as additions to the five vowels and seven consonants mentioned in the song. These same additional symbols had been used by Kawena for many years in her scholarly articles. They are discussed later.

The Hawaiian language had been taught for many years at the Mānoa campus by highly respected ministers, fluent speakers of the language who gave beautiful Hawaiian prayers at commencement exercises and other ceremonies, but who knew nothing about the nature of language (who does know?) or about how to teach a language. Their grading systems were filled with compassion. Students who came frequently to classes received A, students who seldom came received B, and those who registered but never appeared received 'Incomplete'. This appealed to football players. One instructor boasted that he won more games for the University of Hawai'i than any other instructor. Members of the English Department were not amused and advised the better students to stay out of Hawaiian classes. Too much *aloha*, they thought.

In the 1960s, however, attitudes towards Hawaiian were changing. Those known as Chinese-Hawaiians began to call themselves Hawaiian-Chinese or just Hawaiian. Young people were embarrassed that they could not speak the mother tongue. At the University students learned that confusing pairs, trios and quatrains that were written in the same way, could actually be written to show that the words were not at all the same. Thus:

- (a) *mai* 'this way'; *ma'i* 'sick, genital'
- (b) *ai* 'to have sex'; *'ai* 'to eat'; *'ā'ī* 'neck'
- (c) *pau* 'finished'; *pa'u* 'drudgery'; *pa'ū* 'moist'; *pā'ū* 'sarong'

And the English professors decided that Hawaiian was a beautiful language with a rich literature, and a master's degree was earned by Derryl Cabacungan for writing poetry and an opera in Hawaiian with noteworthy English translations. The State legislature repealed the 1896 law against the use of Hawaiian in public schools and voted to make Hawaiian an official language of the State of Hawai'i.

Meanwhile University students and others were thinking that Dr Pukui (she had two doctorates) had been right about the two additions to the alphabet. Two young teachers of Hawaiian led the campaign. They were Larry Kimura and Pila Wilson, both fluent speakers of Hawaiian who knew only too well that many students of Hawaiian ancestry in their classes did not know how to pronounce the word for good (now written *maika'i*) and the name of the State song, 'Hawai'i Pono'ī'. The better students and the leaders insisted that the two new symbols be adopted by everyone who wrote Hawaiian words.

But what to call these names? The apostrophe, sometimes reversed and sometimes not, had long been known to linguists as glottal stop. It had also been known in Hawai'i as a *hamzah* and *'u'ina*. Glottal stop was too scholarly and *hamzah* was Arabic. The old Hawaiian name *'u'ina* meant 'to crackle', hardly appropriate. Kimura and Wilson liked the term used by Elbert in *Spoken Hawaiian*, *'okina* 'break'. The term *'okina* was accepted quickly, with gratitude by many, and was printed in newspapers and on maps, but many scientists complained that it was idiosyncratic and not scholarly, and implied that it was an expensive nuisance to print.

The other *malihini* addition had long been known to scholars as a macron, but this came from Greek. It too should have a Hawaiian name, Kimura and Wilson said, and they introduced the term

*kahakō* 'long mark'. The authors, however, did not admit that in final position the stress is the identifying principle, as here the length is much less noticeable than the stress. Ordinary unmarked vowels in final position are often whispered or omitted, but this never happens to vowels with *kahakō*.

The following table shows how the two additions to the alphabet were accepted. The works cited were published by the Bishop Museum and the University of Hawai'i Press.

		'okina	kahakō
1943	Judd, Pukui and Stokes	yes	yes
1951	Malo	no	no
1952	Titcomb and Pukui	yes	yes
1957	Buck	yes	no
	Pukui and Elbert	yes	yes
1958	Handy and Pukui	yes	no
1959	Ii, Pukui and Barrère	yes	no
1964	Kamakau, Ka po'e kahiko, Pukui and Barrère	yes	no
1971	Malo	no	no
1976	Kamakau, <i>The works ...</i> , Pukui and Barrère	yes	no

Only the first Pukui and Elbert work is listed. Note that Pukui, as usual, was way ahead of her time, and that the Bishop Museum was very slow to accept the inevitable. An outstanding exception was the City and County of Honolulu. Street names are now being written with the new symbols. Tourists do not know what they mean, or how they affect the pronunciation, but they do not complain. Hawai'i was too Americanised.

## FINALE

Our honoree has not been named in this essay, but his knowledge of the Pacific is so vast that he has even written about Hawaiian. I, Samuel Elbert, first met him when he passed through Honolulu in 1955 on his way to the South Pacific to study the Malayo-Polynesian language family everywhere, especially in Melanesia and Indonesia. Several years later Howard McKaughan told me that George Grace was interested in coming to Hawai'i. What did I think about it? "Wonderful!" I said enthusiastically and I say this again!

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